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MYSTERY OF THE McNELLS

*Answer to riddle of stocks & spies
tied to brothers—2 missing, 1 dead*

By BARBARA ETTORRE

IT IS A MYSTERY that would wilt Nero Wolfe's orchids.

It involves more than \$3 million in purloined money and three brothers—two of them missing, the third dead.

It has tainted the spy chief of the Central Intelligence Agency and has touched the director of the CIA, a trusted associate of the President of the United States. It has raised questions about the judgment of the director who, after all, heads one of the most sensitive agencies in the Western world.

The story reaches into the labyrinths of the Washington bureaucracy, the monied halls of Wall Street and the congressional committee rooms on Capitol Hill. It has led to the little town of Bridgton, Maine, where the body of a Queens man is buried.

And, perhaps a bigger mystery is unfolding.

Queens District Attorney John Santucci expects to announce this week whether to order the exhumation of the body of Dennis McNell, the 42-year-old brother of Samuel and Thomas McNell, to determine if he died suspiciously on June 1—two weeks before his older brothers disappeared. The brothers are being hunted nationwide by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

WHERE ARE SAMUEL and Thomas McNell? And, where is the more than \$3 million in assets mysteriously taken from the Triad Energy Corp., a New York-based company that Samuel founded and headed, where Thomas was a consultant, and Dennis, an administrative assistant?

The saga exploded like a bombshell July 14, when a copyright story by The Washington Post quoted Samuel and Thomas McNell's allegations of financial improprieties of Max Hugel, the deputy director of the CIA and its head of clandestine operations.

The two McNells charged that Hugel had supplied them with inside information on two companies in 1974, when they were managing a small brokerage firm. The use of inside information, corporate secrets not known to the general public, to make profits on stock deals is illegal under securities regulations.

Hugel denied the allegations, charging the brothers were trying to blackmail him. But he resigned immediately, saying he wanted to avoid embarrassing the CIA.

The bantam-sized Hugel had been a surprise selection as the CIA's No. 3 man. A "tough little

*Where are Samuel and
Thomas McNell and the
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Computer Corp. in New Hampshire. A good friend of William Loeb, the powerful, conservative publisher of the Manchester (N.H.) Union Leader, Hugel had run President Reagan's successful campaign in Nashua, N.H. Along the way, Hugel became the protege of William Casey, Reagan's campaign director. When Casey became CIA director, Hugel, 56, got the CIA post.

APPARENTLY, THERE HAD been a long and bitter relationship between the McNells and Hugel. The McNells charged he drove an earlier company of theirs into bankruptcy.

But what was the real reason why the McNells wanted the downfall of Max Hugel? Were they simply doing their duty as citizens? Or were there sinister reasons?

Samuel and Thomas McNell have not appeared at Triad's small office at 111 Broadway since before their charges against Hugel appeared, although Triad associates said they have received phone calls from Thomas McNell after the death of his brother, Dennis. The death was attributed to a ruptured spleen, along with intestinal bleeding as a result of shock.

Here the mystery takes a macabre turn: Dennis McNell was thought to have been suffering from cirrhosis of the liver, hepatitis and diabetes, a